

Council extends application deadline for Montgomery County Planning Board

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Wednesday, March 10, 2010; B02

Thirteen applicants have applied to head Montgomery County's [Planning Board](#), but some on the County Council are dissatisfied with the list and have decided to extend the application deadline.

Among those who applied as of Tuesday night were Joseph Alfandre, a member of the Planning Board and developer of Kentlands, an early new urbanist community; Francoise Carrier, head of the county's zoning and hearing office; and John Robinson, former Planning Board vice chairman.

None of the candidates apparently was able to command the necessary five-vote majority from the [Montgomery County Council](#), which oversees the county's \$100 million planning and parks agencies. Council President Nancy Floreen (D-At Large) decided late last week to extend the application deadline.

"We want to get the best candidates," Floreen said. "We are not in a hurry."

Applications were to have been submitted by Monday, but Floreen said the council will accept applications until April 2.

The position is a pivotal one as Montgomery officials begin what they say is a decades-long process to absorb thousands of new residents they predict will settle in the county, while at the same time trying to apply principles of "smart growth" and encourage transit-oriented development.

Among the major issues the Planning Board will examine in the next few years are proposals such as the remake of White Flint, which is expected to win council approval soon; the controversial proposed "science city" west of Interstate 270 that Johns Hopkins University wants to build; and new development in the county's less-affluent east side. The new board chairman probably would play a substantial role in the design of those projects, should they be approved.

Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson, a nationally known planner and academician, said he does not intend to seek reappointment. His term expires in June. Unlike some jurisdictions in the region, the Montgomery parks and planning agency he heads is under the County Council and is not part of the executive branch. The chairman is the agency's only full-time board member. The next appointee will be paid \$160,000 to \$180,000 a year.

Council member Michael Knapp (D-Upcounty), who chairs the council committee that oversees planning and development, said he thought it was a good idea to take more time to assess potential candidates. "Everyone recognizes what a crossroads this agency is at," he said.

In the past four years, there has been substantial turnover at the Planning Board. In 2006, then-Chairman Derick Berlage, a former member of the County Council who served a four-year term, was discouraged by his former council colleagues from seeking reappointment. He had been widely criticized for the agency's failure to carefully manage development in Clarksburg, where a group of community activists unearthed construction irregularities that highlighted weak government oversight.

Hanson, who had served as board chairman more than two decades earlier, was invited by several council members to serve again. In the next four years, the other four spots turned over, in two instances twice, as two new board members, Jean Cryor and Gene Lynch, died and replacements were named to fill out their terms.